



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Grand Canyon National Park

P.O. Box 129

Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023-0129

D18 (GRCA 8219)

February 20, 2003

Dear Interested Party:

Subject: Request for Comments on Initial Proposed Action (General Scoping)

The National Park Service (NPS) is in the planning stages for the rehabilitation of two firing ranges, modification of the Market Plaza Bus Stop, and improving safety and accessibility at Mather Point. One of the firing ranges is located on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon National Park. All of the other projects are located on the South Rim. (See the attached vicinity maps.)

South Rim and North Rim Firing Range Rehabilitation

Purpose and Need for Action

The North and South Rim Firing ranges have been in operation at the Grand Canyon for at least 30 years. These ranges are considered small arms sites, but include the occasional use of shotgun and rifle. They are administrative sites used only by the law enforcement branch of the National Park Service for practice and for qualifying new staff. The North Rim range occupies an abandoned gravel pit, and the South Rim range is located in an abandoned quarry. Both ranges are used year-round, and it is estimated that approximately 30,000 rounds are being fired at the two ranges annually. Over their many years of use, firing range operations have deposited high levels of lead into the immediate area of both the North and South Rim ranges. Although lead cleanup is not an immediate requirement for the National Park Service, the Grand Canyon National Park is being environmentally proactive by implementing this project now. Lead will be removed from the ranges, and further lead deposit will be reduced by the actions described below.

Proposed Actions

Right now, rounds are fired into a dirt berm on the North Rim and into a dirt bank on the South Rim. The method of cleaning the existing soil would be to either sift the soil on site or haul it to an approved landfill. Rehabilitation work at each range would include installation of a bullet catching system that could be described as a backstop of shredded rubber placed on a sloped concrete panel that has been poured on the front side of an earthen berm. Cleaning the backstop would entail use of a front-end loader to scoop the rubber off of the sloped concrete backstop and then brushing and vacuuming the rubber. The lead would then be recycled.

The existing storage facilities are also in need of rehabilitation. A metal storage shed would be placed within the boundaries of the South Rim Firing Range. The walls of the storage shed would be reinforced with concrete or cinder block. An existing metal storage container would be relocated from the South Rim to the North Rim and would replace a small existing wood structure at the North Rim Firing Range.

Modification of the Market Plaza Bus Stop

Purpose and Need for Action

With the opening of the Canyon View Information Plaza and the expansion of shuttle bus operations, the bus stop at Market Plaza has become ineffective. Visitors are confused by the fact that buses are travelling in two directions, but using the same stop. Westbound buses must presently circle through the entire Market Plaza parking lot in order to enter the bus stop in the proper direction. Buses are also being adversely affected by visitor congestion in the lot, which slows travel time and poses increased danger to pedestrians. The current bus stop has a badly damaged braking surface and deteriorated seating, sidewalks and curbing, as well as an inadequate shelter.

Proposed Actions

Improvements proposed include repairing curbs, replacing damaged asphalt surfaces, installing new benches for visitors, and replacing the existing shelter. The park is also considering reconfiguring this location so that only an eastbound bus will be accommodated, which would lessen visitor confusion. The project may also involve the creation of a new bus stop across from the Canyon View Information Plaza access road in order to serve westbound bus traffic.

Safety and Access Improvements to Mather Point

Purpose and Need for Action

Mather Point is one of the most visited viewpoints at the Grand Canyon and is often a visitor's first view of the canyon. This point includes two overlooks, known as the East and West Overlooks. Both overlooks need improvements to meet current accessibility and safety standards. The pedestrian surfaces adjacent to the rim are uneven, and guardrails need to be improved. In addition, there is currently no access to the overlooks for visitors with mobility impairments. At each overlook, improvements would allow visitors with accessibility issues to make their way onto the point.

Visitor carts, which are similar to a golf cart, are currently in use by the park for transporting visitors with mobility impairments between Canyon View Information Plaza (CVIP) and Mather Point. The pedestrian path at the east end of the parking lot that connects with the crosswalk across South Rim Drive is not wide enough to allow use by pedestrians and visitor carts at the same time; nor is there a designated parking area for visitor carts at Mather Point.

Proposed Actions

At the East Overlook, the entrance to the point would be reconstructed to provide a graded ramp leading to a barrier-free viewing platform. At the base of the point, the existing stairs would be removed, and two new staircases would be constructed to allow access to the lower portion of the point. Existing safety rails would be upgraded to meet current safety standards, and new safety rails would be installed for all new construction.

At the West Overlook, a graded ramp would provide access to a barrier-free viewing platform to the west of the existing stairs. In some locations, vegetation would be trimmed or removed to allow for better viewing from the rim. All visible walls and platforms would be faced with stone. Uneven surfaces at the rim of the overlooks would be smoothed wherever possible to decrease safety hazards.

The park is proposing to widen the pedestrian path at the east end of the parking lot to allow the visitor carts to share the path. A designated cart parking area at Mather Point would be constructed. Additional signage for the Mather Point area is also proposed.

Before we begin the environmental analysis for these projects, we would like to hear your viewpoints on the proposals along with any issues or concerns you may have. Please send your comments to the address below, or email Sara White, Compliance Officer, at sara_white@nps.gov no later than **March 21, 2003**.

Grand Canyon National Park
Attn: Sara White, Compliance Officer
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Anonymous comments may be included in the public record. However, the National Park Service is not legally required to consider or respond to anonymous comments.

We appreciate your input on these proposals. If you have any questions regarding the projects, please call Susan Weaver, Cultural Resource Specialist, at (928) 226-0102, or Sara White, Compliance Officer, at (928) 638-7956.

Sincerely,

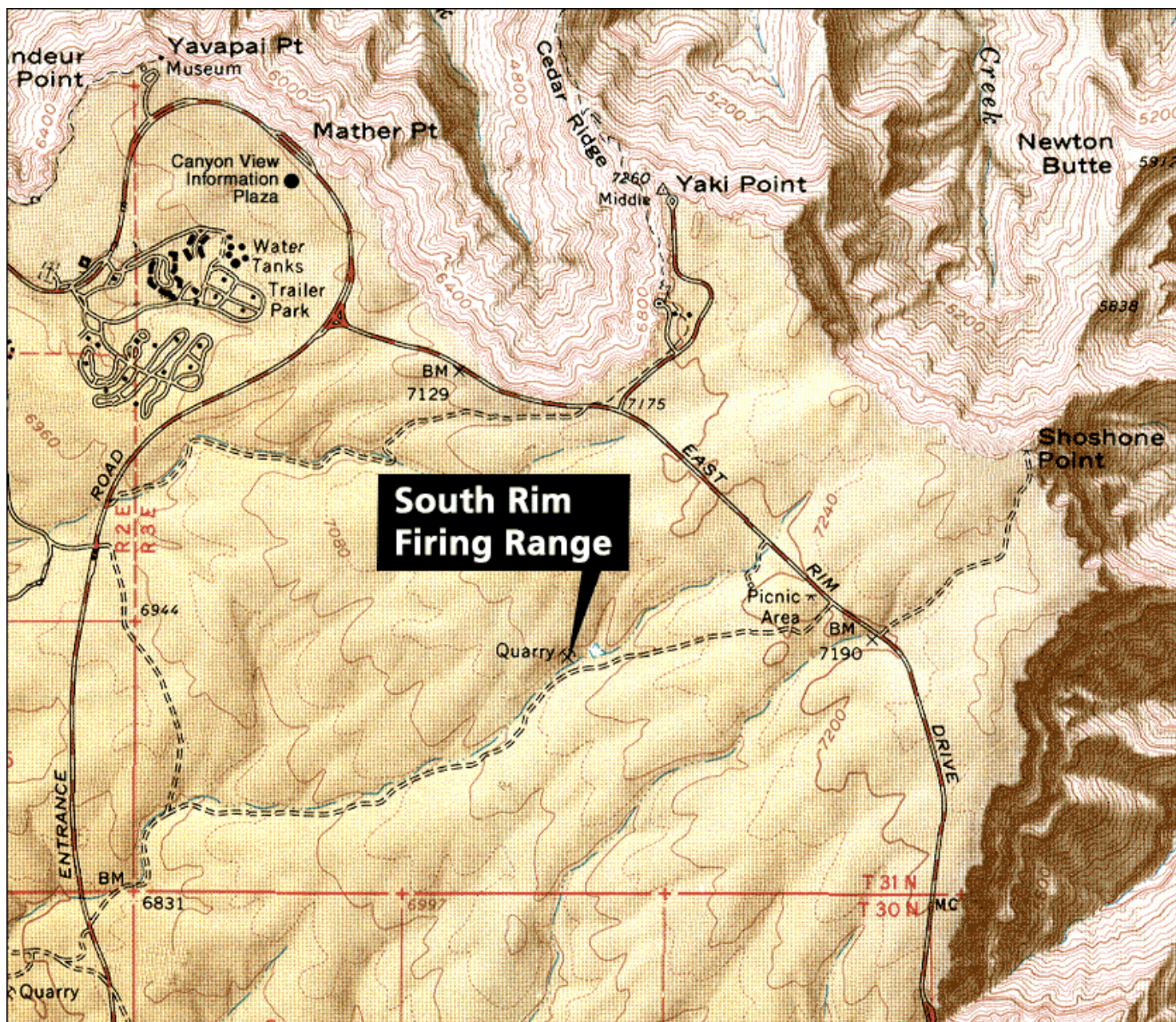
Joseph F. Alston
Superintendent

Enclosures (3)

cc:

Sara White (GRCA 8213) w/copy encs.

If you would like to receive a hard copy of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for these projects when they are complete, please contact Sara White at the address above, at (928) 638-7956, or at sara_white@nps.gov, and one will be sent to you during the comment period. If you do not respond to this request, a hard copy of the EA will not be sent to you. However, please be aware that this Environmental Assessment (when complete) and other environmental documents are routinely available for your review on the Grand Canyon National Park website at www.nps.gov/grca/mgmt/



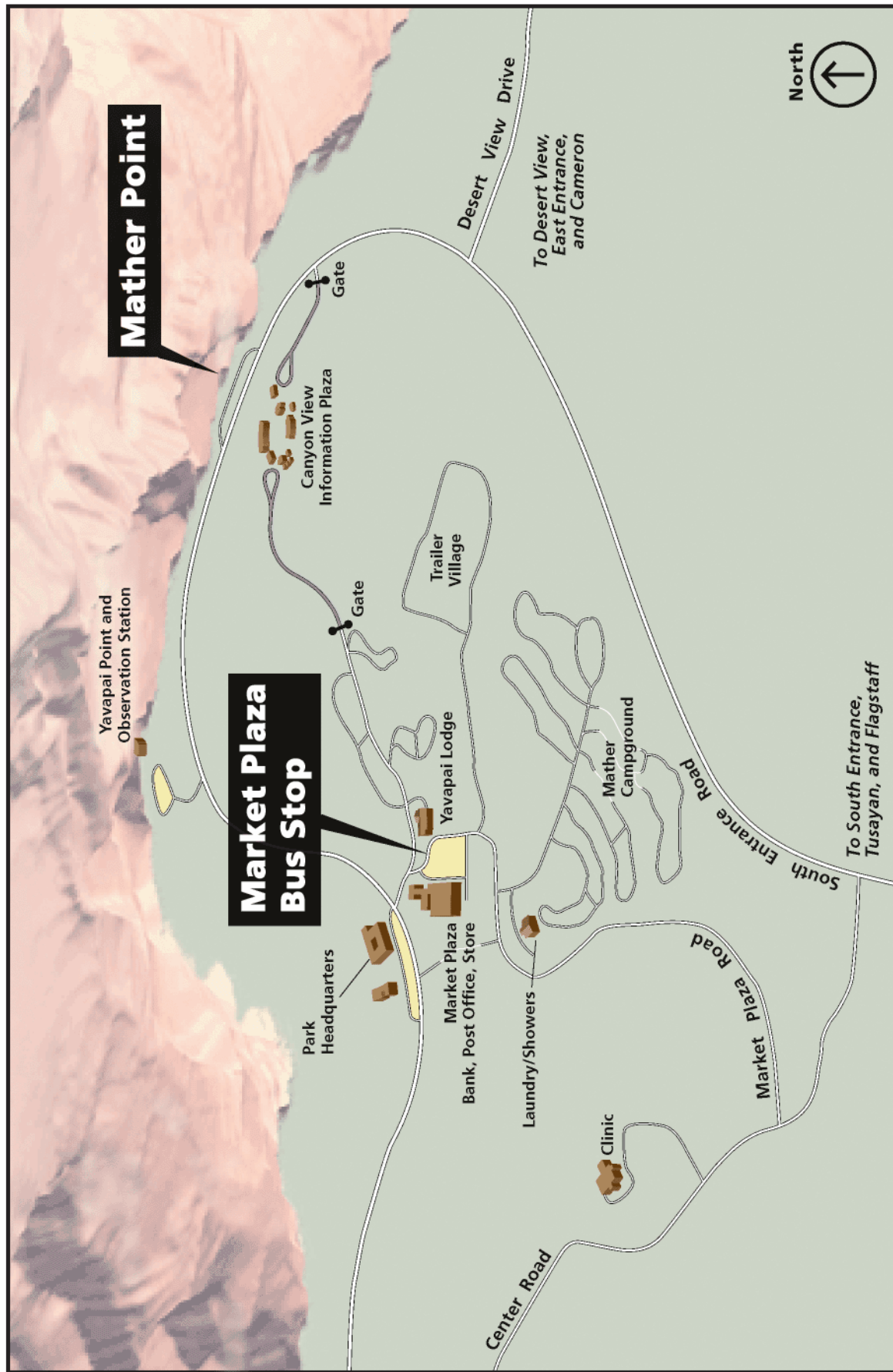
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Mather Point

**Market Plaza
Bus Stop**



Desert View Drive

To Desert View,
East Entrance,
and Cameron

Gate

Canyon View
Information Plaza

Gate

Trailer
Village

Yavapai Lodge

Mather
Campground

South Entrance Road

To South Entrance,
Tusayan, and Flagstaff

Market Plaza Road

Center Road

Yavapai Point and
Observation Station

Park
Headquarters

Market Plaza
Bank, Post Office, Store

Laundry/Showers

Clinic